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THE SURVEY OF THE CANAL.

WORK IN NICARAGUA BY THE UNITED STATES EXPEDITION.

DIFFICULTIES AND DISCOURSES OF THE
UNDERTAKING—PROFESSOR HAUDIT.

TIDE GAUGE.

San Carlos, Nicaragua, Jan. 23.—The hydrographic party, under the command of Lieutenant G. C. Haudit, and the party of civil engineers under charge of G. W. Brown, both belonging to the United States Nicaragua Canal Commission, arrived here on December 21. They found quarters for a while in a house in this town, but on January 5 Lieutenant Haudit had his camp completed, and his party slept under canvas that night. This was the first experience of the kind for the majority of the force. The camp is situated on the left bank of the San Juan River, just as it leaves the lake. Two of the tents are on the site of an old fort which in by-gone days commanded the river. The others are built on a paved road, evidently an approach to the fort now disused, as the fort itself is.

On January 7 the work of the survey began in earnest, so far as these two parties are concerned. Mr. Brown began the measurement of a base, but found the country so difficult that he had to abandon his first line, after having cut through wood and swamp for upward of a mile. A point was reached where it was impossible to set up a transit. The men sunk their armpits in the mire, without getting solid ground for their feet. The party had better luck with their next effort, and a line has been cut through the forest for nearly three miles, which will afford a practical base for the hydrographic party. The difficulties Mr. Brown's party had to contend with cannot be overestimated. Every inch of the line had to be cut. Leaving San Carlos, in one hundred yards you are in a dense forest, through which no natural path exists. The machete disposed of the underbrush and the new growth of young trees, the axe of the larger ones which bar the way. At present, standing on old Fort San Carlos, where the primary station is established, one can look away through the forest to the hill three miles distant where, at the end of a narrow path, the second base station has been put up.

All difficulties are now forgotten, however, as is always the case when success follows strenuous effort. There is general sorrow for Mr. Brown, who began this hard job, and when success was in sight was relieved by Mr. Stewart. Mr. Brown has been recalled to the United States as a witness in the court-martial of Captain Carter, United States Army. In the mean time Lieutenant Haudit and his party have not been idle. There being no base to work on, one was assumed and worked out with energy. Signals were built during the first week following January 7 and reconnaissance lines of sounding run. The regular system of lines was begun on January 15, and the total up to date is upward of three hundred sea miles. The signal building was a new experience to all hands. In the Coast Survey or any other hydrographic survey number is supplied to build proper tripod signals, which will be visible at seven, eight or even twelve miles distance, depending on the size of the sounding used. Here on Lake Nicaragua a man starts on a signal-building expedition barehanded, as it were. He has to build some sort of a structure that can be seen and distinguished from the woods which surround the lake and cover the hills and all the islands. In several cases two or three acres of land have had to be cleared in order to give a view to seaward of the improved signal. Some conspicuous tree has usually been selected and marked so as to be identified from all directions by the sounding boats.

This party deserve great credit for the way they brought their steam launches to San Carlos and there assembled them and had them running about the lake within twenty-four hours after work was begun.

Lieutenant Haudit received a telegram from Admiral Walker, the Chief Commissioner, the other day, telling him that the Nicaraguan gunboat *Enterprise*, Ninety-Three has been placed at his disposal for the running survey and the determination of the area of the lake. Mr. Haudit replied that he would be ready for her on next Thursday, the 27th.

In his absence, Lieutenant Lucy will continue the work in the vicinity of San Carlos. Lieutenant Haudit will be away for ten days or two weeks, and about two weeks after his return the work on the lake will be finished. The party will then begin on the river and won't be out of the department again, where their labors will cease. The Commissioners passed through here on the 13th on their way to Rivas and the west coast.

The party, to a man, are anxious to start, as it is evident that the funds are running low. This is unfortunate, as the work cannot be done without large expenditures. Colonel Laddow estimated the cost of a proper investigation of the feasibility of the canal at \$100,000,000, and the work cost \$50,000, but it started out as if it had \$100,000 and more to come. Now, as the expected increase of appropriation becomes uncertain, economy becomes a necessity. It is imminent danger of the work being only half done.

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In the mean time, unless Congress makes another and larger appropriation soon, the work begins so well, will end in no result, as the exact question of the possibility of a canal, to say nothing of the fair estimate of its cost, will remain just where it is, as a great amount of the people's money will be spent for it to become a matter of record. The professor is inclined to think that although he feels morally certain that he has made a good hit at Greytown, scientifically he has no evidence of how often or how much.

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